

PROHIBITION.

The Dispatch Begins a Canvass of the State on the Great Issue of the Hour.

WILL IT BE WET OR DRY?

Washington Comes Out for the Constitutional Amendment and

DON'T CARE WHO KNOWS IT.

The Gigantic Business Done by the Distillers in This End of the State, and

THE ENORMOUS SUMS INVESTED.

Interviews With Prominent People, Who Differ in Their Views on the Subject.

PARTY LINES WILL NOT BE DRAWN

A canvass of counties in Pennsylvania is now being made by THE DISPATCH on the Constitutional amendment question. June 18 having been virtually fixed by the Legislature as the date for a popular election to decide the matter, it is now squarely before the people as a live issue. Preparations for the campaign are already being made in Pittsburgh and Allegheny county. The Special Commissioner detailed for THE DISPATCH's work began in the southwestern corner of the State, where vast distilling interests will be ruined if the amendment is adopted. Washington county was first sounded. It will give a majority for the amendment.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL COMMISSIONER.)
WASHINGTON, Pa., January 20.—Did you ever sit near a well-behaved man and become impressed with the belief that he was under the influence of liquor because the air about him was redolent with fumes of whisky? Well, you often found, on closer observation, that he wasn't drunk. But there was plenty of whisky about him. It happened that a flask, in which he had no ownership or interest, had been uncorked or broken in his vicinity.

A Whiff of Whisky.
The counties south and southeast of Pittsburgh smell very strongly of whisky. Every few days you get a whiff of it. The Monongahela and Youghiogheny valleys bring the tempting odor almost in an air-line to your city's wharves, and with the waters of those rivers mingle the refuse of a score or more distilleries. Railroad freights distribute this southwestern Pennsylvania smell a little faster and farther. It long since penetrated Philadelphia, and "Gibson's best" is synonymous there with "Old Monongahela Rye" in Pittsburgh.

But the counties embraced in this whisky-producing region are not drunk. It's only the smell that makes their conduct and future policy suspicious. And it must be admitted that the smell is surprisingly and remarkably loud! Here are some figures which will convey some idea of its strength:

Reservoirs of Whisky.
In the territory described there are at this moment 7,000,000 gallons of whisky in bond at the various distilleries. This represents a capital, in the liquor itself, of \$7,000,000, or \$1 per gallon. Where will all that ocean of whisky go if Pennsylvania votes for the Constitutional amendment?

The amount of whisky taken out of bond in the same district every year is worth about \$2,000,000. That represents the business done in a year by the distilleries of Westmoreland, Greene, Fayette and Washington counties. In addition to all that, the amount of money invested in buildings, apparatus, real estate, live stock, etc., by the distillers will not fall much below \$3,000,000. What effect will the annihilation of this industry have upon the valleys of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny?

A Demand for Rye.
These distilleries must have grain to produce whisky. I am told that at one Monongahela distillery alone—that at Gibson, which is the most extensive rye whisky manufactory in the United States—only 500 bushels, making 50 barrels of whisky. The establishment has a capacity of double this and sometimes attains it, operations being kept up the year round. The grain is selected, cleaned and ground with all the care and cleanliness of a flour mill. It takes 1,200 ears a year to transport grain to and whisky from this one distillery.

The Government tax of 90 cents per gallon amounts to about \$50,000 per month on the product of this single establishment, fully 50 per cent of which is clear gain to the Government. Eight Government officials are kept busy in the buildings all the time. Whisky made at Gibson is exported to all parts of the world. Attached to the works are large cooper shops. About 50 men are employed in all departments. The firm enforces strict total abstinence about the premises, any employee found drinking liquor being immediately discharged, and the same penalty is imposed on anyone

known to have seen another drink and failed to report it.

Washington for Prohibition.
Yet in spite of this large and long-established industry, there is much encouragement in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania for the advocates of the prohibitory amendment to the Constitution. A deep-rooted temperance sentiment pervades at least two-thirds of the region. This bore its first fruit 15 or 16 years ago when the Legislature passed the local option law. Under it Washington county voted "no license" with 1,200 majority. Greene county pronounced against license with 1,400 votes to spare, and Fayette county gave a majority of 1,200 against license.

In two of the counties that result was regarded as remarkable. Beside being identified with the distilling business, Greene and Fayette were overwhelming Democratic in politics.

Can't Have Saloons.
It was under the same law that 42 of the 60 counties in the State voted "no license." The next year the law was repealed. But never since that day have there been saloons in Greene county or Washington county.

Washington county was in June next cast a majority of votes for the constitutional amendment. It did not take me very long to find that out. In beginning THE DISPATCH canvass of the State on the liquor question for this campaign, I selected the counties named above. Washington county was not picked out as the first reportorial pumping station because it was considered important in the distilling business. On the other hand less of the distilling interest lay along the Monongahela river boundary than in either Westmoreland, Greene or Fayette. Gibson is in Westmoreland. Knowing that there was harder work beyond, I concluded to make a easy start with Washington, knowing well that temperance advocates, having heard of her moral influences, and doubting not the reputation she has for political power.

High Judicial Fences.
It has been 20 years since the Judges of Washington county courts commenced refusing to grant licenses for the sale of liquor. They have been rigidly to this policy without interruption up to this day. The judicial fence has never once been jumped by an agile liquor dealer. A few have tried it, but their failures were so funny that they retired to the legal gymnastics of Grand and District Courts in Pittsburgh to go into training before making such leaps again.

I wonder if it ever occurred to the Washington county judges of the past 20 years that they have a most illustrious example for their fearless policy toward the liquor interests. If I remember history correctly, Allegheny county got her celebrated Judge Alexander Addison, from Washington county. He first appeared in public as a preacher in the town of Washington, in 1788. The legal profession who unduly attended the enforcement of the excise laws of the United States, which culminated in the Whisky Insurrection of 1794. It was his bold stand on this question which made him many enemies, and was partly the cause that led to his impeachment.

The Whisky Insurrection.
Subsequently he became the Judge of Allegheny county's courts. He had to execute his functions among a turbulent people, and it was Judge Addison who unduly attended the enforcement of the excise laws of the United States, which culminated in the Whisky Insurrection of 1794. It was his bold stand on this question which made him many enemies, and was partly the cause that led to his impeachment.

Washington county was involved in the Whisky Insurrection as badly as either Allegheny, Fayette and Westmoreland. It was in Washington county that some of the worst depredations were committed, and it was on that spot of the county where Monongahela City now stands that the army of 15,000 militiamen raised by General George Washington to put down the insurrection, finally encamped. Washington had stopped at Bedford, and Light Horse Harry Lee, as commander of the army, issued his proclamation to the insurgents on Washington county soil.

Handsome Majority Predicted.
Yet, notwithstanding all its judges and vote against the liquor traffic. This is the only inference that is to be drawn from several interviews which I have had with leading men here.

Rev. J. M. Barnett, the financial agent of Washington and Jefferson College, has had perhaps better opportunities of gauging public sentiment than other ministers, because of his wide acquaintance throughout the county and his frequent visits to the interior. When questioned to-day about the coming issue, he said:

"Washington county will vote for the constitutional amendment. There is no doubt of it. The amendment will have a handsome majority. This will be about the same as the usual Republican majority. That I calculate, will give the temperance people a significant majority. I base my prediction on my knowledge of the character of the population. We are an agricultural people in the townships, devoted to the care of beautiful farms and good crops of grain."

Keeping Students From Temptation.
In the towns of Washington, Cambria and Monongahela City, we are proud of our seats of learning, and with college students from all parts of the country the common desire seems to be to keep the liquor temptation far away from their young people.

On the borders of the county, up the Monongahela river and along the Pennsylvania Railroad, there is probably a strong liquor element among the coal miners, but whatever influence they exert at the June election will be offset by the vote of sturdy temperance yeomen in the heart of the county. The policy of the courts refusing license here for 20 years past has had such a healthy result in educating the people that nobody in the town of Washington wants saloons. Under the Brooks law even there were scarcely any applications. On the whole I feel very sure that Pennsylvania will adopt the constitutional amendment, for in every county you will find plenty of drinking men who will vote willingly for it. That was our experience several years ago when local option was voted. People were perfect now did all they could to abolish that which they knew was a temptation they were powerless to resist so long as it was around them. It will be so again."

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"I believe the legislative caucus did right in ordering a special election for this purpose. The question is thus removed from all partisan influences. It now stands on its own merits. I believe that Washington county will vote for the amendment and give it a safe majority. It would be difficult at this time to estimate the majority. If gauged by the majority of the Republicans in this county, it would be impossible to say what it would be, for Republican majorities here have been growing every year."

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Mr. Hostetter was called upon at his home, and was perfectly non-committal upon the subject, refusing to either affirm or deny. He said that the developments at the annual meeting Tuesday would be open to all papers, but he did not care to say one word as to whether the report was true or not.

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